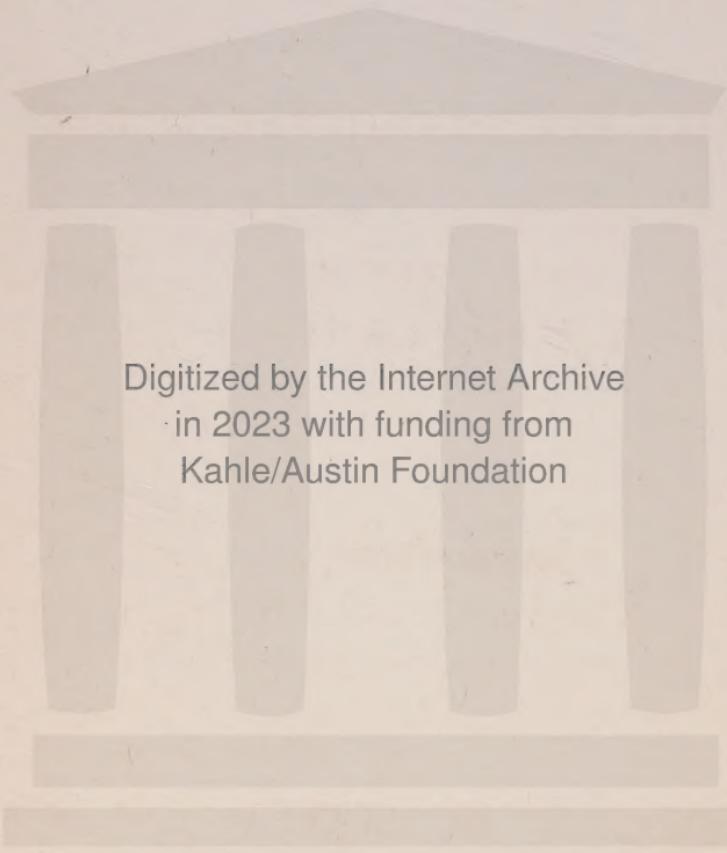


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To the President's Office
From Caleb Davis
1931



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“THE LORD COMETH”

THE WORLD CRISIS EXPLAINED

BY

CHRISTABEL PANKHURST, LL.B.

FOREWORD BY THE REV.

F. B. MEYER, D.D.

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FOR E W O R D

THE truth of the Lord's Second Advent is held theoretically by all evangelical Christians; but, as that Advent is relegated to some far-away and distant future, it is inoperant as a factor in the life and outlook of the professing Church.

Far otherwise was it with the Church of the Apostolic Age. The Hope of our Lord's Return was held with tenacious faith as an immediate prospect. It inspired the martyr in the arena, the friends that gathered around the departing Saint, and the little groups that stole out with all secrecy to gather around the Table of loving memory and anticipation.

They did not place their hope of world-betterment on political or social reorganisation, but on His Advent who said, "Behold, I make all things new"; and

Foreword

though centuries intervene between His spoken promise and the present hour, the lapse of time is of no account in those eternal estimates, in which a thousand years are as one day and one day as a thousand years.

We believe, therefore, that God is not slack concerning His promise; and that there is no reason why the gleam of the Advent may not break in on the world in its present condition of unpreparedness. “In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.”

The events that are transpiring around us to-day are exactly such as the Master’s words taught us to expect, as preparing His pathway; and new voices, from unexpected quarters, are crying *Ecce venit*; amongst which we greet that of *Christabel Pankhurst*, to whom this message has been entrusted, and who, turning from all other methods of world-renewal, bids us lift up our heads and rejoice, because the Redeemer draweth nigh.

F. B. MEYER.

INTRODUCTION

THIS book is addressed to people who have hitherto given little or no thought to the sublime question with which it deals.

Its purpose is to draw attention to the Biblical Prophecies which tell of the future now immediately before us. My hope is that readers of these pages will make their own study of Biblical Prophecy in the light of the present significant national and international conditions. I would earnestly suggest also that they consult various books dealing with prophecy that are far more complete than the brief introductory sketch here given.

The Publishers of this book (Morgan & Scott Ltd.), one of whose Directors is the Rev. F. B. Meyer, D.D.,¹ who has been so kind as to write the Foreword, will, I know, gladly give information as to the leading

¹ Dr. Meyer is also Chairman of The Advent Preparation Movement, who hold monthly meetings at Kingsway Hall, London.

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treatises on prophecy to all who apply to them.

I give this explicit information because I should not wish to awaken interest in the subject-matter of this modest book without indicating a precise source of further information, and because the cause of Advent Preparation is of pre-eminent importance now that this Age is drawing to its close.

The Biblical Prophecies, it must here be emphasized, while they refer both to the beginning and the end of the Millennial Age, deal chiefly and far more fully with its beginning, and we see predicted with remarkable amplitude and detail the events and conditions preceding and accompanying the opening of this approaching new Age.

This fact, that throughout the Old Testament and the New, the prophetic strain is devoted almost entirely to the beginning of the Millennium, is of the highest importance to us, because it means that the things foretold are not still distant by ten centuries or more, but are imminent, and of urgent concern to us at this present time.

There has been in the past a difference

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of opinion among Christians as to whether the Lord Jesus Christ would make His promised second visible appearance to mankind at the beginning or at the end of the Millennium, but in the new light cast by the remarkable world-developments that have arisen since 1914, it is now unmistakably certain that He will come to initiate the Millennium. Therefore His coming is not removed from this day by a thousand years, but will occur before the new thousand-year Age begins.

The Signs of the Times are witnessing irresistibly to the truth that He is coming, and coming soon. It is awe-inspiring to watch current history fitting into the very mould of prophecy. Once you have the clue to the meaning of the existing world crisis you marvel that everybody else does not also see how prophecy is fulfilling itself in the world-events of the passing days.

Throughout this book I have ignored destructive criticism of the Bible, because that criticism is now old-fashioned, superannuated, based on an exploded materialism which could no longer claim to be scientific, had no foundation in historic fact, was wholly unphilosophical, was false

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to real experience of life. The originators of destructive criticism, in its different varieties, allowed themselves to be misled by imperfect human knowledge, misapplied, instead of relying upon revelation concerning truths outside the bounds of human discovery.

The Bible rings true, and never truer than in these critical days. It has the note of authority. Without its revelation concerning the future into which we are even now entering, humanity would be sailing without chart or compass into a totally unknown rock-strewn sea. There is literally no other guide. All other books dealing with future developments prove vague, speculative, and baseless generalities.

Some have said that they were not yet sure whether they wish for the fulfilment of the Bible's prediction of the Millennium and the millennial reign of the Son of God. It has to be remembered, however, that all this will come to pass irrespective of any human wishes, of any human and therefore imperfect conception of justice and righteousness.

Among the readers of prophecy and works on prophecy there are scoffers and

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scorners, as one knows. So far as that goes, it would be easier to keep one's thought and belief on this subject to oneself. But somehow one is constrained to tell other people. Just as did the women at the tomb whom the risen Jesus bade to go and tell the news, so those who see the truth as it is in Christ Jesus have been telling it out to others ever since.

This thing is certain, not the most obstinate sceptics where prophecy is concerned can read even such a simple and short exposition as this, without being thereafter inwardly haunted by the question : "Can it be true ? Suppose it were true, after all ! "

Others who are still unconvinced, yet have an open mind, will certainly search the Scriptures for themselves, and by their light read the Signs of the Times as they daily increase and multiply. In pursuing their researches, they will notice the prophetic word that "in the time of the end," that is, when the age is ending, the "wise," those ready to profit by the wisdom of God, "shall understand" what is about to come to pass. They will take heed also to the impressive Scriptural state-

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ment that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God,” and the “things of the Spirit of God” are “spiritually discerned.”

How true that is of what is still a matter of faith, which “is the evidence of things not seen,” until there comes the day when, visibly, “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, for all flesh shall see it together”—when “every eye shall see Him.”

Christ has been expected before, but He did not come, you say. That may be, but this time He is coming. In any household, when the return of a beloved, long-absent traveller is expected, the waiting ones rush to the door, perhaps a score of times, in the mistaken belief that the traveller has arrived. Yet, after all these passing disappointments, the traveller comes at last! So is it with the soon-returning Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords.

In sending forth this declaration of faith, I am both joyfully expectant and deeply impressed by the solemnity of my theme, the manifestation of God to humanity, “the appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

CHRISTABEL PANKHURST.

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PART I

THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING

CHAPTER I

WHY JESUS IS COMING

“I go to prepare a place for you. And . . . I will come again, and receive you unto Myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also.”—JOHN xiv. 2, 3.

JESUS is soon coming back, as He promised. That is the only hope of the world, for by no human instrumentality can the world be cleansed and healed of its terrible ills.

We men and women have not the goodness needed, not the loving-kindness, nor the wisdom, nor the power, to regenerate the world. It is the task, not of humanity, but of Deity, infinite in wisdom, power and love.

The testimony of history, of present experience and of Scriptural Prophecy is that the human instrument has failed, is failing and will fail to establish God’s

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Kingdom upon the earth. Prophecy testifies further that only Jesus, the Anointed One, the Christ, the Son of God, can and will, when He returns as Lord of lords and King of kings, establish the Kingdom, and make His Father’s Will supreme on earth as it is in heaven.

Some Christian will perhaps interpose a word as to the work of the Holy Spirit, but let us here recall the fact that Jesus, who promised that the Holy Spirit should be here in His absence, also proclaimed that He Himself would return visibly, with power and great glory. The Holy Spirit indeed came, but Jesus Himself has not yet come again, and the establishment of the Kingdom awaits His return. The work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus clearly defined, and it did not include the establishment of the Kingdom, for that task is reserved for Jesus Himself.

The coming of Jesus will not mean the end of the world,¹ but simply the end of

¹ The Authorised Version of the Bible, by an unfortunate mistranslation, gives “world” instead of

Why Jesus is Coming

the present Age, or Dispensation, which is to close with a season of tribulation and world-purification. Then will begin the new Dispensation, marked by conditions of righteousness, peace and happiness, the Millennial Age, which, if it depended upon ourselves for its coming, would be and remain a beautiful mirage ; but because it depends upon the divine promise and power, it is surer than the rising of the sun.

That sin, sorrow and warfare have disfigured human history up to now, and that "Failure" must be written across the page, is admitted. It used to be thought that when certain elements in the community should get a larger share than heretofore in national and international government, all would be transformed. But that belief is gone for ever. It is, for instance, impossible to imagine that the

"Age." Thus the disciples are made to say : "What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world ?" whereas what they really asked was, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the AGE ?"

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working men will put the world to rights, seeing that manual workers are of precisely the same flesh and blood, of precisely the same nature, with precisely the same faultiness, as other people. Obviously, they will not succeed where those who ruled before them have failed. To realise this fact now, is to be spared bitter disappointment hereafter.

Well, then, the women ! But we women too are human, different in some respects from men, but with our full share of human nature and human failing. Assuredly our political enfranchisement was a necessary measure of justice, whereby we ceased to be politically irresponsible ; and having now become politically responsible, we can more easily realise that we are wholly unable, just as men are unable, even to form, much less to put into effect, a policy that will regenerate the world. As time goes on, we women shall become increasingly aware of this and so shall be brought to ever greater reliance upon God, and the hope which He holds out to

Why Jesus is Coming

the world in Christ Jesus. But this rebeginning of the world is far from being the sole purpose of the second appearing of Christ.

He is coming again to reveal the power of God the Father. He is coming to establish finally the authority of the Bible, and to prove it actually written at the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. He is coming, bearing still the marks of the Cross, to reaffirm His atoning death and resurrection. He is coming to vindicate His own Deity, and to silence for ever the denial that He is God the Son, to whom is given all power in heaven and on earth.

CHAPTER II

HOW I LEARNED OF HIS COMING

“I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; . . . I will make darkness light before them.”—ISA. xlii. 16.

THIS faith, that Jesus will soon come again, first dawned upon me in 1918. When the acute danger of the earlier months of that year were over, with the Allied Armies on the way to victory, one could review the experience of the War, and, in the light of it, envisage the future.

Like so many others, I had lived in an atmosphere of illusion, thinking that once certain obstacles were removed, especially the disfranchisement of women, it would be full-steam ahead for the ideal social and international order. I had even thought that, after its tragic interruption

How I learned of His Coming

by the War, the march of progress would, if the Allies were victorious, proceed according to pre-war programme. But when, in 1918, I really faced the facts, I saw that the War was not “a war to end war,” but was, despite our coming victory, a beginning of sorrows.

Considering the issues, the events, and the currents and cross-currents of the War, and relating it, also, to the history of times past, and having regard to the way things go and ever have gone, even in times of peace, this is what I realised as I never had realised it before:—It is not laws, nor institutions, nor any national or international machinery that are at fault, but human nature itself.

I had a sharp and terrible vision of the fact that the same passions, greeds, ambitions, that caused past Wars, including that of 1914, would continue to rend and tear the nations. The lust for power, especially for world-power, would, I saw, be a continuing curse—world-empire being desired and contended for by one claimant

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after another, whether by some class, some nation, or some race, and whether led by an individual or prompted by a collective will-to-power.

That a fully victorious Germany would have reduced the Allies to the sternest subjection, is fully understood, and this made one realise the awful possibility, even in this Twentieth Century, of a ruthless, economic, political, and still worse, spiritual domination by a future successful aspirant to world-power.

The German thrust for world-power, though thwarted in the late War, would be resumed, if not by Germany, then by some other power. The War would end, not in a peace, but only in a truce, and a troub-
lous one at that.

Dark, dark was the future as I looked into a vista of new warfare, with intervals of strain, of stress, of international intrigue, of horrible preparations and inventions for slaughter—times of so-called peace, that would be hardly less terrible, and no less demoralising than actual war—not to

How I learned of His Coming

speak of all sorts of accompanying economic troubles and social and political decadence !

Just then, by what seemed a chance-discovery in a bookshop, I came across writings on Prophecy which pointed out that in the Bible there are oracles foretelling and diagnosing the world's ills, and promising that they shall be cured. Until that day I had taken the prophecies of the Bible no more seriously than a great many other people still do take them. I had simply ignored them, never thinking that they had any bearing whatever upon the world-problems of our time. But now I eagerly followed up the clue which this bookshop discovery had given me. What did I read ? That God foreknew, and has foretold in the Bible, the evils of this Age, and their gathering and darkening as the Age draws to its close—above all, that He has promised the return of Jesus Christ, to Whom He has reserved the Imperial Sceptre of the world. Thus, world-power will cease to be the cause of fratricidal

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human strife, for it will be exercised in divine love and wisdom by the Son of God.

“Ah! that is the solution!” My heart stirred to it. My practical political eye saw that this Divine Programme is absolutely the only one that can solve the international, social, political or moral problems of the world.

The only trouble was, that it seemed too good to be true. As yet I believed not for very joy. The mourning disciples could not for joy believe they saw their risen Lord, and I for the same cause feared to believe that “this same Jesus” will really come to break the vicious circle of history, put an end to human failure, and begin an entirely new dispensation. Too good to be true! Too good to be true! I can apply to myself the reproach earned by the disciples—“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” concerning Him.

Then the routine of life and work went on, for the War continued, with the duties it involved. Later came the Armistice

How I learned of His Coming

and after-war problems at Versailles and in Britain. But the hope of the promised return of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords was there as a refuge from the concerns and cares of the world. It was a hope too often, I am ashamed to say, submerged in the minor concerns of life. How apt the warning of Jesus, who said, in foretelling His return : “Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.” Many times I should have been caught unawares, had He come at that stage.

For a long time, too, mine seemed too fragile a flower of belief to speak of, and expose to the cold wind of other people’s possible scepticism. I felt that I must go slowly, study more and make quite sure, or at any rate become better qualified to defend the faith that was in me. More and more I left behind the activities and preoccupations of the past, travelled, and thus could observe from a new vantage point the world-events that every day

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are moving more rapidly toward the fulfilment of prophecy. Above all, *as I studied more profoundly what the Bible has to say*—then my faith reached all its completeness.

Thus I write on no hasty impulse, but after steady and prolonged consideration. I affirm my conviction that Jesus Christ is coming again, in accordance with God’s revealed purpose, to “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him” (Eph. i. 10).

After nineteen hundred years, “all things on earth” are still very far from being “gathered together in Christ.” Millions do not own His name. Even in so-called Christendom, multitudes reject Him. The world’s ways are not according to His will. This Age is largely a Christ-defying Age. When Moses “delayed to come down out of the mount” the people demanded “other gods,” saying, “As for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him.” There are many, many who are thinking thus of the world’s Redeemer

How I learned of His Coming

while He remains still absent from our sight.

“ Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory : receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls ” (1 Pet. i. 8, 9).

Humanity as a whole is not moving to that. “ *Except I shall see—I will not believe,* ” said doubting Thomas, and he has and will have his innumerable successors as long as the Saviour remains away.

“ Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed,” said Jesus ; but He showed the nail-prints all the same.

The world, like Thomas, will not, until it *sees*, hail Him, as we who know Him by faith already hail Him : **MY LORD AND MY GOD.**

One’s life should surely teach one some outstanding lesson. The lesson of my own life, of my personal experience and of my observation of the history of our time, is this : our Personal need of Jesus Christ,

“The Lord Cometh”

and the world's need of Him. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

The world is in this evil, troubled condition because He is still away who alone can give it wise, just, and righteous governance. How true His word, true for one and for all, for the individual and for the nations: “Without Me ye can do nothing.”

CHAPTER III

THE BIBLE'S POWER OF PROPHECY

“ We have also a more sure word of prophecy ; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts : Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man : but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”—2 PET. i. 19-21.

THE Bible foretells the Second Coming of Jesus, and foretells also the world conditions that will precede and will follow His coming. But is the Bible able to foretell the future ? Yes ! it is. That has been proved by the actual fulfilment in history of all its prophecies up to date.

The Bible, in claiming to be the Word of God, asserts its own miraculous prophetic quality. For instance : “ Known unto God are all His works from the beginning

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of the world ” (Acts xv. 18). “ Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets ” (Amos iii. 7).

“ Hath He said and shall He not do it ? Or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good ? (Num. xxiii. 19).

In the Book of Daniel we read that there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known what shall be in the latter days. God’s power both to foretell and to fulfil, is again stated thus :

“ Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare : before they spring forth I tell you of them ” (Isa. xlvi. 9).

Another majestic utterance : “ I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure ” (Isa. xlvi. 9, 10).

The Divine Voice continues : “ I have spoken it, and I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it, I also will do it.”

The Bible's Power of Prophecy

What is it that God has purposed and will do? Listen! "I will bring near My righteousness: it shall not be far off, and My salvation shall not tarry." What is the Righteousness and what the Salvation of God? Not the abstract "ideals" or "principles" of which we humans talk! God does not offer us mere lifeless abstractions. He offers a PERSON. His Salvation is JESUS CHRIST. His Righteousness is JESUS CHRIST. The great promise of God is—HIS SON. "The Spirit of prophecy is the TESTIMONY OF JESUS," says the Bible. He is the Central Theme of the whole Book, from Genesis to Revelation, as any real examination of prophecy discloses.

The Lord Jesus Himself, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself," saying, "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets concerning Me." And what is there written concerning Him? That He would

“The Lord Cometh”

come to suffer, and that He would come to reign ! Did the one prophecy contradict the other ? No ! for there were to be two Advents : the first, which is over, and the second, which is yet to be.

At His first coming, those who loved Him “ beheld His glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ” ; “ but the world knew Him not.” At His second coming there will be no mistake possible. The world cannot then do otherwise than know Him, because, “ Behold He cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him.”

Then will be verified the Psalmist’s word, “ The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory.”

CHAPTER IV

SOME PROPHECIES ALREADY FULFILLED

“ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”—MATT. v. 17, 18.

BIBLICAL prophecy is simply future history. Some of the prophecies have already become past history. The fact of their fulfilment instructs us that the remaining prophecies will also be fulfilled in the ripeness of time.

To illustrate the prophetic power of the Bible, let us choose from the chief prophecies already fulfilled a few outstanding ones among the many relating to the birth, death and resurrection of the Redeemer.

The historic fact of Jesus' birth at Bethlehem was foretold through the Pro-

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phet Micah in these words: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel ; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Mic. v. 2). There was the prophecy of the Incarnation, of the birth and where it should occur, together with the affirmation of the Deity of Jesus, who Himself, while on earth, declared His eternal Deity by these words : “Before Abraham was, I am.” His prayer, before His betrayal and crucifixion, “And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was,” was exactly consistent with Micah’s message—“whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

When those wise men came from the East, saying, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews ? ” King Herod gathered together the chief priests and scribes of the people and demanded of them where

Some Prophecies already Fulfilled

the Christ, the Messiah, who, as every Jew was aware, would be ruler in Israel, was to be born. Whereupon they referred to the very passage from Micah quoted above, and replied : “ In Bethlehem of Judæa ; for thus it is written by the prophet.” Herod, accordingly, directed the wise men to Bethlehem, and there they found and worshipped the Babe.

Cut off out of the land of the living, numbered with the transgressors, making His grave with the wicked and with the rich man in His death ! So ran the ancient prophecy of Isaiah, so literally fulfilled in the death of Jesus, who was crucified between two thieves, whose body was about to be disposed of with theirs, when, quite unforeseen by His enemies, it was honourably tended, and placed in the tomb of the rich man, Joseph of Arimathæa. The taunts and mockings He endured on the Cross were faithfully reported beforehand in Ps. xxii. : “ All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn ; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

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He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him ; let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.”

Most marvellous of all, we have in Ps. xxii. the Crucified One’s own cry predictively reported : “ My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ” words wrung from the Son who had never till then known a break in His communion with the Father. In that separation from God was summed up the sin and the penalty of sin which He bore for us.

It cannot be said, in face of such prophecies as these, that the Bible does not foretell the future ! Jesus Himself plainly foretold His own death and the resurrection to follow. “ With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. . . . This is My body which is given for you. . . . This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you.”

In these poignant words the fulness of His sacrificial agony and love are laid open to us. And ourselves—broken in heart as

Some Prophecies already Fulfilled

we hear these words—we are ready that our old human nature shall be crucified with Him so that we, being nailed to the Cross with Him, and becoming one with Him in death, may be one with Him in His resurrection—“that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.”

Our Lord announced His death and resurrection to the disciples in these words : “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him ; and the third day He shall rise again.” The first time Peter heard the prophecy of this tragic death, he protested : “Be it far from Thee Lord ; this shall not be unto Thee.” But He turned and said unto Peter : “Get thee behind Me, Satan, thou

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art an offence unto Me ; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

David, long since, had foretold the miraculous resurrection of his great Descendant; and Paul in his sermon at Antioch pointed to this prophecy and its fulfilment. He reminded his hearers that “David saith, Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption” (in Ps. xvi.), and continued : “David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption ; but He [Jesus], whom God raised again, saw no corruption” (Acts xiii. 35-37).

The enemies of Jesus among the Jews well knew that, as part of His teaching, our Lord was prophesying His own resurrection. That is why, after He was dead, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, “Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the

Some Prophecies already Fulfilled

sepulchre be made sure until the third day.”

Those who to-day deny the resurrection are simply echoing the words of the chief priests and Pharisees, and making Him out to be a deceiver. High and clear above their unbelieving murmurs, the cry of victory rings out: “I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.”

CHAPTER V

A VERY GREAT PROPHECY

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—JOHN i. 29.

THE sure foundation for belief in the coming of Jesus, the Redeemer-King, and the new Age He will initiate, is supplied in promises already performed. So let us look still longer upon the miracle of fulfilled prophecy. Turning to the Book of Isaiah, chap. liii., we find there that well-known but ever more astounding representation of Israel’s Messiah—our Jesus—written long before the Incarnation and Crucifixion: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” What a faithful likeness was that! Al-

A very great Prophecy

though the people thought Him to be “ stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted ” because of His own fault, yet, as the prophecy foretells, “ He was wounded for OUR transgressions, He was bruised for OUR iniquities : the chastisement of OUR peace was upon Him ; and with His stripes WE are healed.” What a marvellous prophecy is that of the redemption of sinful men and women, through the atoning death of a sinless Redeemer !

Sin is next defined : “ All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way.” Sin is turning away from God’s way to our own way, disobeying God. Such is the Bible’s persistent testimony, echoed and re-echoed through its pages. There is a fashion of assuming that it is sufficient to be in harmonious relation with one’s fellow-creatures, but that is sheer delusion. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, certainly. But that is only the second of two commandments, “ the first and great commandment ” being, as Jesus said, “ Thou shalt

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love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

Man’s relation to God is the all-transcending relation. Since it is the relation of the creature to his Creator, it must necessarily be one of obedience. God is the Source of all life; and therefore sin, just because it is disobedience to God, the turning away from God, breaks the connection between the created being and the source of his life. Death is the consequence. Thus it really is true that “the wages of sin is death.” “By sin came death,” the Bible teaches; and that is the only explanation of the *essential* cause of death that has ever been adduced.

God has a merciful way of simplifying His code of obedience, of reducing it to some one plain test, one simple demand. In that light we must view the command given in Eden: “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat.” There was God’s command to be obeyed, in order that man’s life-procuring

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communion with his God might be maintained. Even should you treat the account as symbolic, the basic truth is there, concerning God in relation to man, and man in relation to God ; concerning sin and righteousness, death and life.

Mysteriously enough, human nature to this day has difficulty in believing, and does not even like to believe, that God can and will provide a simple unified test for man's obedience. Yet when, under the Mosaic law, obedience to God involved manifold requirements, and had a complex definition, it was not found more palatable.

But since then Jesus Christ has become — “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” In Him, the beloved Son, God has summed up our obedience. He has provided that man's communion with Himself shall be restored through His Son. He has provided that the never-ceasing flow of His life from which humanity cut itself off, by turning away, shall, in full forgiveness, flow to us again from Jesus Christ. “For as the

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Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.” And that everlasting life which is in the Son, that very nature of livingness in the Son, is given to us on the condition of obedience, which is thus defined : “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, hath everlasting life.”

The verdict that mankind is sinful, is not agreeable to mankind. It is, nevertheless, a true verdict, we must admit, knowing the world in general and ourselves in particular. The Bible says : “ There is none righteous, no not one. . . . All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” I cannot plead “ Not Guilty ” to that ; can you ?

Gladstone in his book, *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*—and he from his great political place and responsibility, from his experience of himself and other people, had some qualification to speak—wrote as follows :

“ Our Lord has emphatically said, ‘ They that are whole need not a physician ’

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(Matt. ix. 12); and this saying goes to the root of the whole matter. Is there, or is there not, a deep disease in the world ? Are we as a race whole, or are we profoundly sick ? ”

Gladstone’s answer was that it is beyond question that mankind is “ morally diseased.” We must all of necessity come by the way of our own experience and observation to the same conclusion.

For our disease of sin God offers this cure, this great enfranchisement : That by faith in Christ Jesus (that is, by faith in the atoning power of His sacrificial death and His shed blood) we shall be set free from sin and death, and actually be born again, with a new and sinless nature unto a new and deathless life.

This wonderful transaction of divine grace, this wonderful operation of the divine creative power, was actually foretold in Isa. liii. in these words : “ When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days. . . . He shall see of

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the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.”

Yes ! as the Saviour looks upon those who, being born again by faith in the efficacy of His death, are thus His offspring, born of the travail of His soul, born through the offering of His soul, offered in the only possible way through the shedding of His life-blood, He rejoices, and will through all eternity rejoice. “ He shall be satisfied ! ” What a prophecy ! What a fulfilment !

CHAPTER VI

MESSIAH COMETH

“ The woman saith unto Him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ : when He is come He will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, *I that speak unto thee am He.*”—JOHN iv. 25, 26.

THE Jews knew that Messiah was to come ; so far, they were perfectly sound. Their mistake was in not understanding that He was to come first in lowliness, before coming in His exalted power and glory. So, with a strange blindness, they knew not Messiah when He came, although, as St. Peter says, the Spirit of Christ which was in their Prophets had testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

Gentiles have to guard against making the same mistake the other way round—the mistake of knowing that Jesus, who is Messiah, Christ, has come the first time,

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but of not knowing, and therefore not even hoping, that He is coming again.

Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah in His suffering have already been converted into history. Those which announce His coming with power and great glory have still to be fulfilled. Let us consider some of them. They show forth the Messiah chiefly as King in Israel, yet they by no means leave out of sight His relation to the Gentiles. He is to be, as to His humanity, of Israel, of the Tribe of Judah, of the kingly House of David. “There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel,” said the prophet in Num. xxiv. 17. He is to be a greater Moses in saving and leading His people. “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken” (Deut. xviii. 15).

The Psalms ring with the promise and praise of Messiah’s reign. What brilliant flashes of revelation of the person of his greater Descendant David gives us. Here

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is the kingdom conferred and its worldwide limits defined in Ps. ii. : “ I will declare the decree : the Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son ; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.” Here, too, is a clear forecast, given through Zechariah, of what is to be when, after chastisement and dispersion are ended, Israel is restored to the Promised Land and Messiah has come :

“ Thus saith the Lord ; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem : and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth ; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. Thus saith the Lord of hosts ; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities : and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts : I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord

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of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord ” (Zech. viii. 3, 20-22).

That the Babe of Bethlehem will veritably reign and rule as the Davidic King is shown in this passage from Isa. ix. 6, 7 :

“ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon His shoulder : and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

“ Cry out and shout,” says the prophet, speaking down the centuries, to the inhabitant of Zion of a still future day, “ Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.”

Messiah here promises to gather together to the land His long-dispersed and at last redeemed people : “ For I am the

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Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. . . . Fear not, for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west: I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isa. xliii. 3, 5, 6).

Messiah is the hope also of the Gentiles. "He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." He is "a light of the Gentiles."

His coming to assume the Davidic kingship and to take to Himself the governance of earth, is announced in these terms: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth . . . and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

This righteous King is none other than the Child of whom it was announced to Mary, His mother: "The holy thing which

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shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God . . . the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His [fore] father David, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.”

CHAPTER VII

JESUS ANNOUNCES HIS RETURN

“ He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen.”—REV. xxii. 20.

JESUS gave His life as a pledge that He is the Son of God, and will visible return, wielding Almighty power. It was actually His declaration that He would so come, which roused His enemies to the climax of their fury against Him.

Recall what happened: “ The high priest said unto Him, I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blas-

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phemy. What think ye ? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.”

In this promise, sealed by His blood, the Son of God in prophetic vision showed Himself first of all in that place at the right hand of God, which, as foretold in Ps. cx., He was to occupy after His resurrection and ascension until the day for His reappearance before the eyes of human kind. That reappearing is promised and foreshown in the further words, “*and coming in the clouds of heaven.*”

“Coming in the clouds” is a statement repeatedly made in telling of His return. “They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,” the Saviour Himself said in His great prophetic discourse on Mount Olivet.

Long before, in Old Testament days, Daniel, of whose vitally important prophecy more will be said later, had written : “I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven.”

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In the last book of the Bible this testimony is renewed : “ Behold, He cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see Him ” (Rev. i. 7).

Pilate’s question to Jesus was : “ Art Thou the King of the Jews ? And Jesus answered, Thou sayest, Even so ! ” And as King of the Jews did Pilate crucify Him, notwithstanding that the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate : “ Write not, The King of the Jews ; but that He said, I am King of the Jews.” But Pilate answered : “ What I have written I have written.”

Why did the chief priests rage at the saying that Jesus was King of the Jews ? Because it meant that this same Jesus was the long-expected Davidic King, sent from God, who was to restore all, and more than all, the glories of the Kingdom as it had flourished in the days of David and of Solomon, and, moreover, was to be Ruler, not only in Israel, but of the whole earth.

The Jews had imagined that they de-

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sired the coming of this promised King; but when He actually appeared, jealousy, which is native to the unregenerate human heart, and is humanity's besetting sin, surged up in rejection of Him.

“Thy Kingdom come . . . on earth . . . !” asks the Lord’s Prayer. But the Kingdom argues a King, demands a King. Jesus is that King, and He will come to set up the Kingdom, and to make His Father’s will prevail on earth as in heaven.

Nearly two thousand years ago the Kingdom came nigh, and the King offered Himself to His people. He was rejected, and the Kingdom, which had been nigh, was thenceforth afar off—until the King returns, not in weakness and acquainted with grief, but in triumphant majesty, to rule in Israel, and in all the earth as well.

The first and second Advents are seen in striking contrast in Luke xvii. : “And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The King-

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dom of God cometh not with observation : neither shall they say, Lo here ! or, Lo there ! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is *in the midst of you* " (not " *within you*," as the unfortunate rendering in the Authorized Version has it, producing no sense or consistency !). The Pharisees could not, though the Scriptures had forewarned them, believe that the Kingdom would be offered the first time without any outward, visible splendour. They could not believe that the King (and therefore the Kingdom) was then, at that very moment, actually among them, in the midst of them !

Jesus having told these proud and stubborn Pharisees of the points whereon they were mistaken as to His first coming, then proceeded to show them that at His second coming, expectations such as theirs will be more than fulfilled, because then— " as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven ; so shall also the Son of Man be in His day." He spoke

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also this further word as to His presence at His first advent as the King in their midst : “ But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.”

On the theme of His still-future Second Coming He sounded a warning note :

“ And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot ; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded ; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed ” (Luke xvii. 26-30).

That warning was for the time that is now close at hand, close to the day in which you and I are living. It is a warning that rings true. It was uttered by One who knew Himself to be about

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to die as a ransom for many, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” Out of His surpassing love, in the shadow of His approaching sacrifice, He spoke of the tribulation and purging yet to come upon this world as the present Age closes. He was soon, by His death on the Cross, to make a way of escape from the tribulation of which He gave warning—a way open to all who trust in Him, and do not deny His Name. To these He has promised: “I will keep thee from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” There are some who cannot as yet receive such sayings. Nevertheless, the sayings are true, and will be proved to be so by the incontrovertible evidence of coming historical events.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FUTURE SEEN FROM MOUNT OLIVET

“ And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the Age ? ”—MATT. xxiv. 3.

JESUS, in His divine wisdom, did not will that the Apostles and humankind in general should know that over nineteen hundred years were to pass before His promised visible Return. Only a moment before His Ascension the Apostles asked Him: “ Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel ? ” and His answer was: “ It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.” It was for them to know that He would return to restore the Kingdom to Israel, and to be Himself King in Israel and all the earth,

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but it was not for them to know *when* this would be ; the reason perhaps being that the constant watchfulness which, for our spiritual good, He has enjoined upon them, and upon us all, would have been impossible to them had they positively known that more than nineteen hundred years lay between His going away and His coming back. The divine purpose is that during Christ's absence His followers, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," shall "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age ; *looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*" (Tit. ii. 12, 13).

The same reticence concerning the valley of nineteen centuries that lay between the mountain peaks of the first and second Advents had already been displayed in the great prophetic discourse on Mount Olivet, glowing though it is with revelation. The shadow of the Cross was already darkening upon Him. He was burdened by sorrow for the coming afflictions which

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His people were about to call down upon themselves by rejecting in Him their peace and their security. He had foretold to His disciples the destruction of the Temple, and, weeping over the city, the desolation of Jerusalem. The disciples not only asked when these things would be, but, finding their Lord in prophetic mood, they added this other, still more important, and universally significant question : “What will be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the Age ? ”

Then was foreshown to them a great tableau in which both the near and the distant future could be discerned. This prophetic tableau is preserved for us in the reports of the Saviour’s Olivet discourse, given in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The picture is a complex one. It has a background of wars and rumours of wars ; it has a sky showing heavenly signs and warnings. There are stormy seas and waves roaring. We see the figures of false prophets and false Christs. There is the preaching of the

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Gospel of the Kingdom. Then we notice in the picture those remarkable features : Two persecutions ; two tribulations ; two fleeings from danger ; two fierce assaults upon Jerusalem. More than that, we see two Personalities—one human, one Divine ; one evil, the other the Righteousness of God. The first is that dark, strange being whom the prophets have denominated the Beast, the son of Perdition, the Man of Sin, and in Daniel's phrase, quoted by the Saviour in this very Olivet discourse, " the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." The other is Jesus Himself, Son of David, Son of Man, and Son of God, whom we are shown coming " in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

The first of the two persecutions which Jesus foretold on Olivet would be suffered for His name's sake, followed upon His going away. The second persecution will precede His return. The first persecution, which is a matter of history, began with the Jewish Christians. St. Paul took part

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in it until he met the risen and glorified Jesus on the way to Damascus. A long procession of Gentile martyrs for Christ came after. In the second (and still future) persecution, the sufferers will be both Gentiles and Jews. The Jews will be those who, impressed by the signs of the times and enlightened by the Spirit of God, will realize that Jesus as Messiah is about to return, and will travel throughout Palestine and the world generally, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and His coming as King. The Gentile sufferers will be those who, having resisted conversion in earlier days, will have their eyes at last opened, and will seek to make up for lost time by witnessing to the newborn faith that is in them, and declaring that Jesus is coming.

Their testimony will be resented on religious grounds because it will be a dissent from the new-old, non-Christian cult then prevailing. It will be resented on political grounds, because the heralding of Jesus as the coming King of kings will

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be considered a heinous act of *lèse-majesté*, amounting to condemnation of the then-existing world régime, and treasonable support of the world-Ruler and Saviour yet to come, in preference to the personage at that time in power. This will be none other than the Man of Sin, just referred to, who, as prophecy shows, will try to forestall, to outrival, even to prevent the coming of the Lord Jesus, the world's true King of kings. But this sinister pretender and his pretensions will, after a short spell of success, be "destroyed by the brightness of His coming."

Of the two tribulations affecting unbelievers, the first was suffered by the Jewish people, A.D. 70, when also the first of the two prophesied attacks on Jerusalem occurred, the Romans besieging and destroying the city and the Temple, and the survivors of the tragedy being driven forth into the outer world. Some people have actually argued that the Second Coming of Jesus, the consolation of Israel, took place at that time ! But was

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He then seen appearing in the clouds with power and great glory ? Did every eye behold Him ? Did He then cleanse the world of evil ? Did He then make wars to cease ? Did He then bring in that new, and righteous, and blissful world-order which the Scriptures promise ? Absolutely No, to all these questions.

The troubled history of the world since A.D. 70 plainly shows that Christ did not then return. The time of His coming was not yet ripe, as a reference to prophecy shows. The Old Testament foretells, and on Olivet the Lord confirmed the prediction, that there is still in store a future Great Tribulation for the Jews, of whom, on the eve of Messiah's return, a large number will already be living in Palestine. It will be a Palestine recultivated, renewed in wealth and civilisation, but menaced by outside foes,¹ racially and religiously

¹ The Jews will, as may be learned from the prophecies, think to guarantee themselves against all hostility, by a covenant with the aforementioned pretender to world-power, who will, however, eventually cast aside this covenant.

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hostile, and covetous of the advantages, economic and strategic, afforded by possession of that land. It will be a Palestine, the mass of whose inhabitants have not entered into that new peace with God, which He has announced will mark the Jews' relationship with Him in the New Dispensation. But the coming Tribulation will clearly not be limited to Palestine and to the Jews—it will be general in its extent. The warning signs are growing in number and in intensity—"on the earth distress of nations and perplexity." We see that already, and the distress and perplexity are increasing, and will increase.

What is the lesson of it all? Not that we can avert these great world-happenings! They are what the Bible terms "the things that must be." They must be, because the world, the flesh and the devil will have it so. Just as Pharaoh hardened his heart, so the modern world hardens its heart more and more against God and against His Anointed One. If Jesus to-

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day, as before, were to come gently amongst mankind and offer to heal the woe and purge out the wrong that are afflicting and degrading the world, He would be again rejected. For there is not sufficient readiness to obey God, notwithstanding that obedience really means, would people but see it, to accept the supreme honour of co-operating with God.

Can it be that, if the secrets of all hearts were known, there is, in some quarters, more opposition to the Lord Jesus than ignorance of Him ; that there is more jealousy of His Deity than disbelief in it ? “Behold, I stand at the door and knock,” so the infinitely loving voice of the Saviour is saying. “To-day, if ye hear His voice, harden not your heart.” Consider that other word : “And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” That is to say, God’s Kingdom on earth cannot for ever be delayed.

The world to-day, as was said of the antediluvian time, is “corrupt before

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God, and full of violence." Hence the need of the cleansing Tribulation that is drawing near, as the alternative to mankind's acceptance of the better way—the way of faith in the atoning and cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

PART II
BETWEEN THE ADVENTS

CHAPTER IX

WHY THE CHURCH CANNOT ESTABLISH THE KINGDOM

“Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”—ACTS i. 6.

IN the nigh two thousand years’ absence of the King of kings and Lord of lords, certain mighty concurrent chapters of history, divine and human, have had, in accordance with the plan revealed to us, to move to their close. Hence the delay in the fulfilment of God’s purpose thus defined in the Bible :

“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him” (Eph. i. 10).

In the fulness of times those concurrent chapters will be closed. Then, all things

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heavenly and earthly being under the sway of our Redeemer, His millennial reign will begin.

By human reckoning, these nineteen centuries and more are a long period of time, but not so in God's eyes: as says the Psalmist: “A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” What mighty developments have to be completed in this period between the Advents! The Times of the Gentiles have to terminate, and Israel, God's earthly people, have to come to the end of their national chastisement and casting away, and to reach the point of restoration to favour and to service. Above all, these centuries of waiting are the Age of Grace, in which God is calling out a people for His Name. Those who answer this call constitute the Church as God sees it, which comprises those who have been born again by faith in Jesus Christ, as explained in these passages:

“This is the work of God, that ye believe

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on Him whom He hath sent" (John vi. 29).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John vi. 47).

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17).

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. . . . There is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26, 28).

Viewed thus as the whole company of believers, and without reference to any other consideration than that of simple faith in Jesus as the Redeemer, the Dispenser of new and eternal life, the Church is really a new humanity, having as its Head the Son of God.

The Church, in the absence of the Head, can never, as some have hoped, set up God's Kingdom upon earth. The King must return before the Kingdom can be established. Jesus, before He went from the Apostles, commanded them that, after the Holy Spirit should come upon them,

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they should be witnesses unto Him to the uttermost parts of the earth. He did not tell them even to *try* to set up the Kingdom. That He had promised to do Himself on His return. They were simply to witness to Him. This really means, to recruit for Him a company of people, reborn by faith in His blood shed at the Cross—who cannot set up the Kingdom in His stead, and in His absence, but will co-operate with Him, in His kingly task, when the time of His return arrives.

For just as Israel, the chosen earthly people, of whom, concerning the flesh, Christ came, have a great part reserved for them when the Kingdom shall be established; so His spiritual kinsfolk, the believers, who in this Age compose the true Church, and by their rebirth partake of His life and nature, will have a still greater part. For at His Second Coming the King of kings will not be lonely as at His First Coming, but will be royally companioned by His spiritual kindred, reborn through faith in Him.

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Let us say it again, the Church cannot set up the Kingdom while the world's King, and her Lord, is away. The reason of that is to be found in the truth thus stated by St. Paul :

“ Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body ” (Rom. viii. 23).

By these words St. Paul meant that even those who are born again by faith in the Saviour are still hampered by the old nature, from which perfect emancipation cannot be had so long as the Saviour remains away. That is precisely the reason why the Church, consisting of these same people, can never, while He is absent, establish the Kingdom. It is also the reason why human faults and dissensions and infidelity have marred the record of the Church. When we consider, too, that multitudes are not even in the Church at all, the total impossibility of the Church

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establishing the Kingdom is even more apparent.

Shall we here dispose of that other fallacy, that our Lord’s promised Second Coming is to individual Christians “at their death,” or “at some time in their lives.” It is absolutely clear from the Bible that He will appear to humanity in general, and not only to Christians; and that those who will, as He said, *see* Him when He comes, as Son of Man, with power and great glory, will be alive, not dead. A strange thing, indeed, if the Prince of Life could make His Second Advent only by the help of death, the great enemy, as the Christian knows it to be!

As to His coming to the individual Christian, certainly He does, but that fact is perfectly consistent with His promised visible return as King of kings and Lord of lords. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the Age” (for “Age,” not “world,” is the correct rendering here), was the Lord’s

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departing message to His own. He is with them, unseen, through the Spirit, until the close of the Age. Then His coming !

Seen He went : Seen He will return ! That is the unambiguous Scriptural statement.

“ While they beheld, He was taken up ; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel ; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven ” (Acts i. 9-11).

This is what I for one am waiting for, with unwavering conviction that it will come to pass.

Till He come ! “ For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come ” (1 Cor. xi. 26). Not “ till you die ” ! Not “ till He

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come into your heart,” for He is already in the heart of those who worthily eat that bread and drink that cup! Not till you go! Simply “TILL HE COME,” as come He will!

CHAPTER X

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

“And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.”—LUKE xxi. 24, 27.

“THE times of the Gentiles” : What are they ?

Jerusalem, the City of the great coming King, will not be finally liberated, and the Son of Man, who is that King, will not appear until the Times of the Gentiles are complete. So said Jesus, the Son of Man. And He is chief of prophets and historians, because Himself the Maker of History, being that One whom God “hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the Ages ; who being the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had

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by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”—“Whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”

So, when this same Jesus foreindicated the end of the Times of the Gentiles as the season of His return in royal and divine splendour, He spoke with authority. What He meant by the Times of the Gentiles, it is imperative for every statesman, for every citizen, to know. Because the term illuminates all history down to this very day. Unless we realise that we are living in, and near the end of, the Times of the Gentiles, we are necessarily in the dark regarding every national and international problem, and in complete ignorance as to the future of the world.

In His Olivet discourse, Christ took for granted that His hearers would understand the expression “the Times of the Gentiles”; and so they did, because they knew the

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prophetic writings of him whom the Lord in this same Olivet discourse referred to as “Daniel the prophet.” Daniel has told us about the Times of the Gentiles.

Yes ! Daniel, the prophet. I well know that critics have tried to discredit Daniel; but as his prophetic claim has been authenticated by the Son of God, and as his prophecies have, through the centuries, been steadily turning into history, I consider these mistaken critical contentions unworthy the waste of one drop of ink in reply. Daniel comes as scatheless from what Sir Robert Anderson, the eminent exponent of prophecy, called the “critics’ den” as he came from the lions’ den.

The Times of the Gentiles began with Nebuchadnezzar’s attacks upon Jerusalem, culminating in his capture of the city and final overthrow of the kingdom of Judah —and will last until the visible reappearing of the Lord Jesus to deliver Jerusalem from an attack, which will be then in progress, to restore the Davidic Kingdom

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and to establish His mighty, beneficent rule over all the earth.

Daniel, as a boy, saw the Times of the Gentiles begin. He was himself made captive, and taken to live at the Babylonian Court. Early in Daniel's long sojourn there, Nebuchadnezzar had that dream! It was no ordinary dream. It was, indeed, one of the mightiest revelations ever vouchsafed to man. The mark it left upon the King's soul was so deep that, though, when he woke, he had forgotten what the dream told him, he could not rest until he should know what this was and what its significance might be. He challenged his astrologers and occultists to tell him, but they could not.

Daniel, the young Hebrew captive, hearing of the trouble, realised that a divine revelation was concerned. He and his three young companions prayed for “mercies concerning this secret,” and “then was the secret revealed in a night vision.” After giving thanks to God, Daniel sought an audience of the King.

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He was admitted to Nebuchadnezzar's presence. Before relating his vision, he affirmed : "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." Then the vision was told :

"Thou, O King, sawest, and behold a great image. . . . This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay."

But what was it that happened in this vision, given first to the King and then to Daniel ? This :

"Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors ; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them : and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth " (Dan. ii. 35).

But what did all that mean ? It meant

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the pre-written history of over two thousand five hundred years.

Here is Daniel’s interpretation of the dream :

“Thou, O king, art a king of kings : for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.”

This image, in fact, represented a succession of great Empires which have in their day wielded supreme power in the known civilised world. The gold head represented Nebuchadnezzar’s own Empire. The silver and the brass portions of the image, as history has since shown, represented the Empires of Media-Persia and of Greece. “The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron,” said Daniel, “forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things.” A good characterisation of Rome, certainly ! Then to correspond with the

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Eastern and Western divisions of the Roman Empire, there were the two legs of the image ; and as to the toes, these stand for the nations into which the Roman earth was to be found divided at the close of the Times of the Gentiles. For these nations are the modern heirs of ancient Rome. They represent the succession and continuity, despite change, of Rome.

Prophecy indicates that the Roman Empire of old is yet to revive in more distinct and coherent shape than at present, through a confederacy, a league of nations, which shall have at its head a leader, president, emperor, call him what you will—an individual, the “ Man of Sin,” who, for a brief space of time, shall wield that predominant world-power that has ever been the goal of super-ambitious men. Several prophecies in the Bible concur in witness to the rise, and to the short but drastic and evil rule, of this personage.

The international events of modern times, and especially the changes following upon the 1914-1918 War, have done

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wonders in retracing upon the map the lines of ancient Rome, and in sorting out and separating the peoples and territories which came within the Roman boundary, from the peoples and territories which did not come within it.

According to the vision, a Stone destroys this image of Gentile world-power, which vanishes completely. What can that mean ? It means, as Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, and as the record of his words tells us, that the “Times of the Gentiles” will end, and their world-rule will disappear for ever, and that God’s Kingdom will take its place ! Daniel’s words are these :

“ And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed : and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever ” (Dan. ii. 44).

Who is the Stone ? The stone is JESUS CHRIST, earth’s rightful King, once crucified, then crowned.

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“ Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold ; the great God hath made known to the King what shall come to pass hereafter : and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.”

No wonder that Nebuchadnezzar “ made Daniel a great man, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon.” A man so inspired, with that unique foreknowledge of the future, would be invaluable in any country.

The rulers and statesmen of this present time have, however, far more to gain from Daniel’s prophetic wisdom than had the King of Babylon, because they are living when the supreme event which the prophet foresaw is near at hand.

Daniel had a series of visions renewing and amplifying the revelation of what is to happen when the Times of the Gentiles finally run out and the present Age closes. In one of these visions he saw those four

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Gentile world-empires represented all over again, not as a composite image, but as four wild beasts rising up one after the other. (Beasts and birds of prey are favourite emblems of the nations themselves!) The fourth and last wild beast had ten horns, among which afterwards sprouted an eleventh little horn, which subdued three of the others. It had the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking very great things, and looked more stout than its fellows. In his vision Daniel saw one stand by who told him that the horns were ten kings that should arise and an eleventh king after them, who should for a short time hold power over the nations—that same sinister being already referred to, and to be spoken of again in a later chapter. But that was not the whole of the vision, whose grandeur consists in its picture of that same setting-up of the divine régime in place of any and every human régime.

“I beheld till the [human] thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did

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sit. . . . And, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days. . . . And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him : His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed " (Dan. vii. 9, 13, 14).

MAY THE DAY SOON COME !

CHAPTER XI

THE JEWISH QUESTION AT THE END OF THE AGE

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.”—JER. xxxi. 31, 33.

ONLY in the revealing light of Biblical Prophecy do world-problems find their explanation and their final and ideal solution.

The Jewish question has, throughout the Times of the Gentiles, been a grave problem for Gentiles and Jews alike. It still is so !

The Gentiles are perplexed by, and they are apprehensive of, that unknown quantity, the Jewish people; and of their, humanly speaking, unknowable influence upon the course of civilisation.

The Jews, on the other hand, complain

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that their advances in power and importance call forth among the Gentiles an answering anti-Semitism, crude in some lands, subtle in others.

Neither Gentile nor Jew can understand the Jewish question, unless they accept the guidance of the Old and New Testaments taken as a whole. There they both can learn a larger tolerance, a kindlier patience, and, what is more, can find a joint salvation, while they are waiting until "*the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*" (Acts iii. 19).

The Old Testament informs the Jew that Messiah is a Light for the Gentiles ; that in Him all the families of the earth are to be blessed.

More than this, the divine voice is heard prophetically declaring : "I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not: I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My Name" (Isa. lxv. 1). But in the New Testament the Gentiles

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are expressly warned against highmindedness on that account.

“Boast not against the branches. . . . Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Rom. xi. 18-22).

This sends us back again to the Old Testament, to the farewell message of Moses, in which he conveyed to his brethren the divine warning of judgments that would come upon them if they revolted against God, instead of the permanent tenure of the Promised Land and the very great blessings to be enjoyed there, as the fruit of obedience to God. The judgments were to culminate in this manner :

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“ The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known ; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee. . . . And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other ” (Deut. xxviii. 36, 37, 64).

All this was announced by God through Moses before even the people had entered that Promised Land, from which, in judgment, they were later expelled. A miraculous prophecy, literally fulfilled, first in the Babylonian captivity, and finally in the dispersion among the nations that followed the Jews’ rejection of JESUS THE MESSIAH, which dispersion has lasted to the present day. But it is not to last for ever. Moses was further commissioned to announce a great final regathering and restoration to the Promised Land and to God’s favour for which the time is evidently

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now drawing near. This is the promise conveyed by Moses :

“The Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee” (Deut. xxx. 3).

So, after chastisement, will come forgiveness and great blessing for this people whose whole history, whose rise to greatness, whose stern punishment, whose strange preservation as a separate people, amid long and terrible vicissitudes, would, had we not the Biblical Revelation to explain it, be a profound, insoluble mystery.

While they for more than two and a half thousand years have been cast out, chastised, what has been happening according to the Biblical programme ? Something of vast importance, as we might know, for God never wastes time.

To the New Testament again ! There we learn that through the fall and casting out for a time of the Jew, salvation

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is come unto the Gentile. In face of that heart-searching truth, anti-Semitism shrinks away ashamed. Who are we Gentiles, what have we done, have we been so universally true to the Light that came into the world, that we should boast ? Read the whole eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, noting especially these words :

“Hath God cast away His people ? God forbid. . . . Have they stumbled that they should fall ? God forbid : but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness ? . . . For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead ?

Still more explicit is this other great passage :

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest

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ye should be wise in your own conceits ; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved : as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob : for this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes : but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes ” (Rom. xi. 25-28).

The fulness of the Gentiles will come when God shall have completed the work of taking out from among them a people for His Name ; that is to say, the Church. It is a term of purely spiritual import, whereas that other term, the Times of the Gentiles, has reference to the world authority which was conferred by God, for a limited though lengthy period, upon the Gentiles. The Gentiles, as did their Israelite predecessors, have failed, not primarily in their management of human relations, though they have failed

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completely enough there, but in their relation with God. Jesus prophetically summed up this truth when He said of the world, as it will be at His return : “ *When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth ?* ”

The Jews rejected Messiah their King, saying, “ We have no King but Cæsar.” They would not have that Man to reign over them ! But Jesus has foreshown in parable that on the eve of His return a large part of humanity, without distinction of race, will be prepared to repeat the offence of rejecting Him. He spoke a parable on His way to Jersualem to offer Himself as King, because those who accompanied Him thought that the “ Kingdom of God should immediately appear,” and He wished to sweeten the bitterness of hope deferred. He wished also to help them to understand that the reason why His Kingdom was postponed, was that He must go to God to receive from God the Kingdom which His kindred by His human descent would refuse Him.

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It was needful, too, to instruct His followers in their duty during His absence, and to forewarn and so forearm all Christians against the infidelity and scepticism of the days preceding His return. So He said: “A certain nobleman went into a far country *to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.* And he called his ten servants, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.”

There is a question I would ask those people who, in spite of His own promise, and in spite of the signs of these times, still deny that the Son of Man will return with power and great glory to establish His Kingdom upon the earth. The question is this. Do you *want* this Man to reign over the world? If you do not, there is no more to be said. If you do want Him to reign, then begin to search the Scriptures which testify of Him. Pray for understanding, for the wisdom of God which makes foolish the poor wisdom of this

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world. The Deliverer will surely come out of Zion. Surely will He turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

The Jews then will cease to be a perplexity, a problem to themselves and to the world. They will no longer be an object of disapproval, sometimes deserved, sometimes undeserved. For then will be accomplished their spiritual regeneration, promised in these words :

“ For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land. And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you . . . ” (Ezek. xxxvi. 24-27 (R.V.)).

When and how will this miracle affecting a people be accomplished ? It will be

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after their return in large numbers to Palestine, and at the end of that time of trouble which was foretold on Olivet by Messiah Himself. Mention is made of this climax of affliction in Jer. xxx.: “There shall be a time of trouble,” said Daniel too, “such as never was since there was a nation.” At the visible appearing of Jesus the Messiah, the promised new heart and new spirit will be given to His earthly people.

“For the Jews demand a sign”—so were they characterised by Paul, and the required sign they will receive when they shall see Him both crowned and crucified, that is to say, bearing the visible marks of the Cross, when, as foretold through the prophet Zechariah, they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced. Then, as the prophet also foretells, there will be poured “upon the House of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications. . . . In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the House of David and to the

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inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.”

So here we have yet another reason why the Lord Jesus must and will visibly return, that the lost sheep of the House of Israel may behold their Shepherd.

Yes ! the chosen, earthly people have undoubtedly a high calling for the coming Millennial Age.

Yet, remember again, there is an even higher calling for the spiritual people of God, to which all, whether Gentile or Jew, can belong on the simple condition of faith in Jesus Christ—whereupon all distinction between Jew and Gentile disappears.

“ For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us ; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances ; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace . . . and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father ” (Eph. ii. 14-18).

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The glory of the destiny of this people, born again in Christ Jesus, may be measured by the fact that, as the Bible declares, “in the Ages to come” God purposes to show “the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

PART III

“BEHOLD, HE COMETH . . .”

CHAPTER XII

SOME SIGNS THAT THE AGE IS ENDING

“ And there shall be signs. . . . And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. . . . And when these things begin to come to pass . . . know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand.”—LUKE xxi. 25-31.

“ **Y**E can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times ? ” said Jesus to the Pharisees and Sadducees who “ came and, tempting, desired Him that He should show them a sign from heaven.”

Let us in these solemn days avoid their pretentious scepticism and their spiritual blindness. Let us reverently discern the signs of the times, inquiring and searching diligently whether they are the prophesied indications of the end of the Age, and the coming of the Son of man.

Objection is sometimes made that the

end of the Age and the coming of Christ has, on various occasions in the past, been foretold to happen on a particular day, so that some people wound up their affairs and were waiting on that day, and yet He did not come. Such people were not level-headed and careful students of prophecy, though their zeal for their Lord’s Coming will doubtless be preferred to the attitude of those who have entirely disregarded the injunction : “ Watch, therefore, for ye know not on what day your Lord doth come ” (Matt. xxiv. 42 (R.V.)).

The learned writers who have helped so many of us to our present supreme interest in prophecy as found in the Bible, have never tried to fix the precise day and hour of their Lord’s return. Many of them, indeed, have been opposed to every sort of date-fixing, considering that to be beyond man’s province, and that we must rely solely upon the signs which the Master Himself indicated would show His Coming to be near. Others affirm that the prophetic chronology of the Bible, though

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difficult for us to understand, is yet meant to be understood ; and they have, as they believe, discovered by its means a season of years within which the Age will end and the King of kings appear. But although the works of several of these writers date from before this Twentieth Century, they did not expect the end of the Age and the Coming of the Lord to occur until some time in the first half of this century. At the present day all exponents of prophecy, be it noticed, whether they trust to chronology, or only to the signs of the times, are united in believing that the return of our Lord is now very near.

We must all try to discern the signs of the times for ourselves. The question is—whether the present is, or is not, a day of disappearing landmarks, of the continuous, rapid destruction of things as they used to be ?

Very many people are saying that it is, including some people who are totally uninfluenced by Biblical teachings and are guided entirely by their own observa-

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tion and interpretation of events. Decidedly the old order changeth, but it giveth place to no new order of human making.

Were it not that God has decreed otherwise, there would be a new disorder, but not a lasting human-made new order, and that for the old, old reason that our human nature, having the disease of sin, cannot give rise to any social order that is not sin-tainted and so foredoomed to decay.

The signs that are now heralding the end of the Age are many. Among them is the reawakening of the Bible Lands. The signs undoubtedly include the recent ejection of the Turk from Palestine and the Zionist plan, already in active operation, for the return of the Jews to the Promised Land.

These returning Jews are the forerunners of the greater host which is to be regathered there from all the lands wherein they are now dispersed, and will be in Palestine when the closing scene of this Age is enacted. The immediate

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occasion of that larger regathering, who can tell ! Perhaps it will be war or the rumour of war, causing the Jews to claim the right to return to Palestine, on the plea of avoiding compulsion to fight fraternicidally, Jew against Jew, in the respective armies of belligerent nations. Or else that same Zionist fervour, that has already seized the few, may seize the many and urge them to their ancient homeland. All we know is that whatever the Bible says will happen, always and infallibly does happen, when the time is ripe.

Another sign, as already stated in an earlier chapter, is the reappearance on the map of the lines of ancient Rome, betokening the expected renascence of the Roman Empire in modern form.

Wars and rumours of wars were foreseen by our coming Lord of lords Himself to be incident to the closing years of this Age. The greatest war yet known to history we recently experienced, and rumours of wars still deadlier are filling the air to-day.

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Current international events are assuredly fingerposts to Armageddon, the last great battle before Jesus, the Prince of Peace, banishes war from the earth. The Battle of Armageddon is as literal a fact of the history of the near future as the Battles of Waterloo and the Marne are facts of past history. The Battle of Armageddon will end more gloriously—in the appearing of the Son of Man.

The economic conditions of the day are full of meaning to the student of prophecy who foresees them developing, through something like chaos, it may be, into that ordered economic tyranny which will be set up by the coming human world-dictator's will during his brief rule.

The social, moral and religious signs of the Age-end are predicted in the Second Epistle to Timothy, to which I refer you.

Some of the signs there given are already present, if only incipiently. Conditions develop with strange rapidity nowadays, and so will these particular signs, which amount really to paganism in practice

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Re-read the historical accounts of the moral and social symptoms of the decay and final downfall of ancient Rome, and you will the more easily discern and interpret the signs appearing at the present day.

Very significant is the tendency, observable in part of the religious field, to ignore and finally to deny the Deity of Jesus Christ; to aim at some conglomerate religion which shall include everything, and leave out nothing, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified, Him risen from the dead, Him ascended to the Father, Him now seated at the Father's right hand, and Him reappearing, as He promised, in visible majesty.

This decline of faith in Him is one of the surest signs of His return. As He said in His foreview of the things that are to precede His coming, "The love of many shall wax cold."

The abomination of desolation (or the abominable desolator, as it has been translated), standing in the Holy Place,

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is the sign of signs indicated by the Saviour. When that happens the end of the Age and His coming will be imminent.

Something of the meaning of “the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place,” one might discover from the types supplied by Antiochus Epiphanes and by the Roman doings in A.D. 70. But quite explicit information on this subject is given us, notably in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, where we learn that the world will not see “the Lord Jesus revealed from heaven” until there has first been revealed :

“That man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

A vivid portrait this of the dictator, which corresponds with the accounts given elsewhere, and especially in Daniel and in Revelation. He is to become head of one of the nations, and from that, and by rapid degrees, to become head of the

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league of nations, corresponding to the Rome of old time. He will grasp at and for a little while obtain predominant power in the world.

Intoxicated by his own dazzling success, he will set himself up as a very God¹ and exact the worship of his fellows, until the nightmare of his domination shall be abruptly ended by the Coming of the Lord, the truly Divine King of kings. Nothing at all incredible in such a forecast!

Some are already, as it were, rushing headlong to meet and to acclaim this false Shepherd. As it is prophesied, "I am come in My Father's name and ye receive Me not; another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John v. 43).

The religion of humanity which some already put forth to supersede Christianity, can obviously lead to the worship of an

¹ We are told that he will be aided and abetted by a so-called religious teacher, whom the Bible calls the False Prophet.

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alleged Superman. There would be the apotheosis of humanity !

The rendering of divine honours to an earthly ruler has strangely characterised human systems of rule in times past. We read in Daniel's history of the Gentile government of his own time, of cases of the attempted substitution of man's authority for God's authority. The Roman Emperors, too, claimed deification and worship. Their modern successor in world-power will do the same, the Bible tells us. In a spirit of rivalry he will desire to anticipate the dual civil and religious authority of the coming Christ, and he will claim to be the political and the spiritual saviour of the world. This claim will be admitted by those who at that time are still resisting the contention that only Jesus can suffice to set the world chaos right. They will hail gladly a mere human being who professes that he, instead of Jesus, can do so. This Pretender, it is foretold, will have some command of occult power—“even him whose coming is after the working of

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Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders.”

The mystery of iniquity so deepens and darkens in these times, that many are now regaining, or acquiring, a belief in Satan as a supernatural¹ person. “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,” said the Saviour, He whose goings forth are from everlasting.

The existence of Satan is another of those disputed Scriptural affirmations which will be patently put to the test of human experience before the world is much older.

“Ye know what withholdeth that he the man of sin might be revealed in his time,” says the Apostle, and goes on to indicate, in sufficiently clear terms, that the Spirit of God hinders, and will hinder, the full manifestation of evil until the due time.

¹ It is being realised, too, with a new vividness that Satan (“the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan” as he is expressively termed) “fashioneth himself as an angel of light” that he may the more easily “get an advantage of us.”

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Then the Holy Spirit will be withdrawn, so that mankind shall learn to what dreadful plight the world is necessarily reduced when humanity has not God, but only itself to rely upon.

That will be the sole possible teaching left for those who will not trust in “the grace of God which is given us by Jesus Christ”—“He who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

We who are fortunate enough already to have received all this that God offers us in Christ Jesus, can claim no superiority of our own to those who have not yet received it. “According as it is written: He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

In fact it is not until we have in some measure realised “the exceeding riches of God’s grace in His kindness to us through Christ Jesus” that we begin to realise also our own personal inadequacy, imperfection and sinfulness, measured by the divine standard.

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The more grateful then must we of necessity be to God “ who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

We know, each one of us, that we should be in a poor case if we had to stand on our own merits. Some of you who read this may have whereof to glory before mankind, but none of us has anything whereof to glory before God, because before Him, as the prophet says, “ We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” They may pass muster in the dim light and by the imperfect standards of human judgment, but in the intensely pure light and by the sublime standards of the divine, nothing but divine righteousness can stand ! However, by the grace of God—we may be clothed in the righteousness of God through faith in Christ.

Prophecy is not meant to satisfy mere

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idle curiosity as to the future—it delivers this message, “ Prepare to meet thy God.” To the unprepared, the prophet’s words apply : “ Woe unto you that desire the Day of the Lord! To what end is it for you ? The Day of the Lord is darkness and not light ” (Amos v. 18).

Prophecy warns of the “ hour of trial which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth,” from which Jesus Christ, who is the visible manifestation of God, has promised to keep those who have faith in His word, who do not deny His name, but who put their trust in Him.

Let us therefore, instructed by the Signs of the Times, be found ready, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness of God which we acquire through faith in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XIII

RESURRECTION AND TRANSLATION

“I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”—REV. iii. 10 (R.V.).

IN what manner will this promise of the risen Jesus to His faithful ones be carried out?

The answer to this question is founded in the supernatural. How futile it is to attempt to explain, or rather to explain away, on merely natural grounds, mysteries that are supernatural!

On the other hand, we stray into dangerous territory if we reject the leading of that only safe guide to the supernatural, the Bible.

That the supernatural exists, many sceptics as to religion are disposed to admit, because of the increasing evidence

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of its existence coming through certain psychic manifestations.

But that is where the guidance of the Bible is indispensable. For the Bible not only reveals the righteousness of God, of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but reveals also that evil is still present in the supernatural. Take, for example, this passage from the Sixth Chapter of Ephesians which, expressed in plain modern English, reads :

“Be strong in the Lord and in the power which His strength gives you. Put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the strategy of the Devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers, against the forces, against the rulers of the darkness that is upon this world, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the supernatural realm.”

What a vivid presentment that is, of sin in the supernatural exploiting sin in human nature !

On the Cross was fought and won the

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supreme battle against spiritual wickedness in the supernatural. What the human spectators saw and heard of the suffering of the Redeemer was but a part of the whole. There was more in the crucifixion than met their eye. Most of it transpired in the unseen.

There are no terrors, no dangers, no suffering comparable to supernatural terrors, dangers and suffering. Jesus dared and endured all that for us. His was no merely physical ordeal. Hence the unparalleled agony in the Garden, on the Cross !

God has two modes of activity in the Universe He has created, the natural and the supernatural modes. The miracles recorded in Scripture illustrate the working of supernatural law, and in particular the resurrection of the Saviour.

The days of miracles are not ended, as the world will shortly see !

The second appearing of Jesus Christ, when He will, to borrow the Prophet's phrase, "rend the heavens and come down," is an approaching miracle which will

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be more real than any of those natural phenomena which we take for granted because we have witnessed them already !

But before that miracle of His Coming, so that every eye shall see Him, there will occur that other most significant miracle of the return of Jesus to receive His own, who already acknowledge Him as Lord and Saviour. This will be the fulfilment of His pledge—“I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also.”

The promise to return to meet His own is conveyed also in the Acts of the Apostles i. 11: “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

Just as after the resurrection, “Him God . . . showed openly ; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God ” (Acts x. 40, 41) ; so, at His coming for His own, the Lord Jesus will not be seen by the world in general, but only by

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His own people. His visible majestic appearance to all mankind will come soon after.

Let us notice that the Apostles trusted undoubtingly, looked forward joyfully to the Second Coming of their Lord to summon believers to join Him, when their new and future service would begin.

The truth of the return of the Lord, St. Peter in his First Epistle declared when he wrote :

“ The elders of the Church which are among you I exhort (who also am an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed). Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind ; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away ” (1 Pet. v. 1-4).

St. Paul repeatedly and from first to last

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testified that Jesus is coming a second time. Only a little while before his martyrdom St. Paul wrote :

“ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing ” (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8).

St. John, beloved of his Lord, was made the chief herald of His return. Paul and Peter and John and the rest died before their Lord had appeared. But that does not affect the truth that He will yet appear. The Apostles themselves knew that they might die before His coming, but they equally knew that He would return after their death, if not before it.

The great promised gathering together with their Lord at His Second Advent would in any case come to pass and in this manner :

“ For the Lord Himself shall descend

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from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17).

Resurrection is the promise to the Apostles and all other believers who die before His return. Translation is the promise to those believers who are still alive when He returns.

One can hardly pause to argue with those who at this day are still denying the Resurrection of Jesus. No valid historical evidence has ever been adduced to disprove His Resurrection.

The Bible gives conclusive evidence that Jesus rose from the dead; and the historical statements in the Bible, though sometimes challenged, have never yet been proved inaccurate. On the contrary, archeological research is continually unearthing evidence of the truth of Biblical accounts

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of past history, and further archeological confirmation is doubtless still to come.

Everything, save human reluctance to believe what has not yet come within our actual experience, concurs to prove the Resurrection.

On what principle of God’s law Jesus rose from the dead we are told in the Acts of the Apostles by St. Peter speaking of his Lord: “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.”

Why not possible? Because by sin came death, and Jesus as the sinless One was therefore not susceptible of death.

Indeed the more astounding miracle is not that Jesus rose from the dead, but that He, being sinless, was able to accomplish His death, to remain even for a moment “holden of death”—“under the dominion of death.” That miracle might well have strained the divine power to the uttermost!

They *saw* Him after His resurrection. The women saw Him first. The Apostles

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saw Him “to whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.”

He was seen “of above five hundred brethren at once.”

Paul, the until then unbelieving, resisting, rejecting Saul, tells that after the Ascension, “He was seen of me also.”

Christ is risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that are asleep!—the Apostle’s cry of assurance rings through the centuries:—“The firstfruits of them that are asleep.”

He continues, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. xv. 22, 23).

So all who have faith, who trust in Jesus, who look to Him, which means accept of Him His proffered gift of eternal life, which He obtained for them by His own death on the Cross, will, “at His coming,” be

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in the likeness of His resurrection—they will form a harvest of which He is the firstfruits.

Now, if the thought of the resurrection of the dead seems strange to some, the translation of the living, so that they shall not see death, seems even stranger. But why? At this very time there are some people who believe that human beings, by the development and exercise of mere innate human power, can perform extraordinary super-physical feats, or can procure the materialization of spirits, and so on.

The Bible, however, makes no claim that any human power can effect the miracle of the resurrection of the dead, or the translation of the living. What it says is that divine power can perform this miracle.

The translation of believers will not be a psychic phenomenon: It will be the creative act of the Spirit of God. The promise of this has been given; fulfilment will follow.

There are more things in God's plan

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than are dreamed of in the philosophy of scoffers. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.”

In the light of so much wondrous accomplishment of prophecy it all the more behoves us to believe, as did the patriarch, who “staggered not in unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform.”

In that wondrous Epistle to the Hebrews whose opening words are majestic triumphal music, we have this same prompting to faith :

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder

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of them that diligently seek Him ” (Heb. xi. 5, 6).

When upon their resurrection or translation, as the case may be, believers meet their Lord, with what body will they come? In that redeemed body which the Apostle in the Eighth Chapter of Romans tells us he is waiting and longing for! It will, as we read, be “an incorruptible and an immortal body ” (1 Cor. xv.).

The redemption of the believer through faith in his Redeemer, whereby he becomes a new creation, will extend even to the redemption of the body, when the Redeemer comes again.

That is why “ we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change this body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.”

CHAPTER XIV

“EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS!”

“Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all the nations of the earth shall mourn because of Him.”—
REV. i. 7.

WELL may there be mourning when the many of all nations who have rejected Him shall see the Crucified One returning, bearing the marks of His truth and of His sacrifice.

How emphatically Jesus has insisted and repeated that His coming will be visible to mankind here on earth.

“As the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall the Son of Man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.” The time is near, though

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the sceptics will be quite unexpectant of it, “when the Son of Man is revealed.”

That very title “Son of Man,” which He associates with the prophecy of His return, is in itself the assertion that He, as the God-Man, will appear in bodily form to the bodily eyes of the dwellers on earth, as visibly as He did in the bygone day when also, as the Son of Man, He suffered and was rejected. The only difference will be that this time He will appear glorified and with such power that the world cannot reject Him, even if it would.

The Bible has much to tell of the time that immediately precedes His coming, of the manner of His coming, and of the consequences of His coming. All should make their own researches into these mighty prophecies.

The kingdoms of this world are not yet the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Whatever some may say, He does not yet rule over the earth: His reign as foredestined Prince of this world has not yet begun,

“Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!”

just as David's reign, after he was anointed as king, did not at once begin. Jesus said before His betrayal and death : “The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me”; and again, speaking prospectively of the crucifixion, “the Prince of this world is judged.”

Judged, yes ! But judgment upon the Prince of this world has still to be executed, as it will be when, but not until, this Age ends and Jesus, the Prince of the New Age, returns to reign.

When both human and supernatural resistance to His reign is overcome, as it will be in the Age-end crisis, the Millennium, the new and golden Age, so long foreseen, can begin.

God's Kingdom upon earth, prayed for countless times, will at last have come.

Wonderfully different the new Kingdom will be from the present Age and all its works. This we may learn from the Sermon on the Mount, which gives the basic principles of the divine Kingdom on the earth as ruled by its coming King.

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The joys and blessings of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ as Son of Man are beautifully prefigured in the Bible.

An ideal internationalism will be established by Him after the last human attempt in that direction has been made, and, as we have seen above, has completely failed. For we learn from Isaiah :

“ And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills ; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob ; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths : for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people : and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more ” (Isa. ii. 2-4).

“Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!”

Human methods of abolishing war will end in the Battle of Armageddon! But the divine Prince of Peace will succeed where humanity fails. Under His rule “nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more!”

The very brute creation will abate its fierce “struggle for existence” judging by the Eleventh Chapter of Isaiah; and those exceptional cases of animal fraternity, which in this Age are our delight when they occur, will then be general.

The Psalms are richly jewelled with inspired glimpses of the reign of earth’s future Divine King; for example :

“The King of glory shall come in.”

“Say among the nations that the Lord reigneth. The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved. He shall judge the people righteously” (xcvi. 10).

“When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory” (cii. 16).

“The Stone which the builders refused

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is become the headstone of the corner” (cxviii. 22).

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the City of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the Great King” (xlviii. 1, 2).

Some people are puzzled by the prophesied kingly relation to this earth of Jesus, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, “by whom and for whom were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, who is before all things, and by whom all things consist.” In short, they do not understand that He whom God has appointed Centre and Lord of the Universe should also reign over this earth in particular. But to question this is to put our own imaginary limit to divine Omnipotence and Omnipresence. Why, even a human being plays many concurrent parts, sustains many relationships at one and the same time!

“Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!”

The Bible says that Jesus will come and will reign, and things announced in the Bible always have happened and always will happen, however incredible they may seem in advance ; as we read : “ I have declared the former things from the beginning . . . and they came to pass ” (Isa. xlviii. 3).

What is more ; the things God declares in advance happen precisely in the manner in which He says they will—not in some other manner of human invention. In this absolutely literal way, every prophecy concerning our Redeemer has been fulfilled up to date. The remaining prophecies will also be literally fulfilled.

The promise of the Bible to those who travel by way of the Cross is that “ Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness and the First-born from among the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth,” who “ loveth us and loosed us from our sins by His own blood,” has made us to be a kingdom, “ to be priests unto His God and Father.”

The fulness of the privilege of service

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this promise may involve we cannot wholly know until He comes, “for now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

Meanwhile, we have there another aspect of the wonder of the Cross.

Certainly Jesus spake as never man spake, but it is by the Cross and His death upon the Cross that He is marked out from all others.

“He who knew no sin was made sin for us; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. v. 21).

By a strange mistake it has been argued in support of other religions that they are pre-Christian. But that is to attempt to apply our limited human concept of time to the supernatural. The Cross radiates in all directions, if we may so express it—radiates backward as well as forward.

In the supernatural, where religions originate, the Cross was for ever fore-known, as it will be remembered through eternity. Far from Christianity being an

“Even so, Come, Lord Jesus !”

imitation, or adaptation of other religions, it is other religions that are fragmentary imitations and adaptations of Christianity. But they all leave out the essential truth of the Son of God dying to make atonement for ungodly and sinful humanity. They all leave out the Cross.

Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. His goings forth are from everlasting. He was loved of the Father, had glory with God before the world was. He is the foreordained Redeemer whose crucifixion was known from all time. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. We read that in heaven there will be sung this new song :

“ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing ” (Rev. v. 12).

Earth, too, will soon take up the song, for this is God’s plan for the world, in its most beautiful expression : Christ Jesus, being in the form of God and the equal of

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God, nevertheless humbled Himself, took on the form of man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross—wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and has decreed that at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Very far is humanity from this unanimous acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord. That will not come until He appears to put doubt to flight and manifest Himself visibly as the once crucified but then crowned Redeemer.

Yes, He is coming! History is now rushing, racing on to the fulfilment of the great prophecy.

The Bible’s final message is from Him :

“Behold, I come quickly.”

“Surely I come quickly.”

We who love His appearing, make the Apostle’s prayer ours—

EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS!

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